Province of
British Columbia
Ministry of Environment
and Parks
RATHTREVOR BEACH
MASTER PLAN

105-03365/

# RATHTREVOR BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK

# MASTER PLAN

Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Environment and Parks

# MEMORANDUM

To: J. N. Massolink
A/Assistant Deputy Minister

Date: 87-09-30

File:

This Master Plan for Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park is submitted for your approval.

RECOMMENDED: _____ _____

G. Trachuk
Director
South Coast Region

Date

APPROVED: _____ May 9/88

J. N. Massolink
A/Assistant Deputy Minister

Date

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## A. Plan Highlights

1. The primary goal of Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park is to protect and present an outstanding ocean bathing beach and associated upland.

   The specific objective related to this goal is:

   - To increase the capability of the park to sustain high use and maintain a high quality experience.

2. Secondary goals are:

   a) To serve as a major park and recreation information and education outlet;

   b) To provide complementary day opportunities based on the park's cultural and natural resource opportunities; and

   The specific objectives related to these goals are:

   i) To expand the information and education program within the park;

   ii) To maintain the diversity of park vegetation communities and cultural landscape for visual and aesthetic as well as ecological values;

   iii) To encourage native wildlife such as deer, small mammals, waterfowl, shorebirds and songb irds through appropriate small scale enhancement projects; and

   iv) To increase use of the park's more natural areas.

   This plan recognizes the high use levels of Rathtrevor and makes provision to not only maintain but optimize use. The plan proposes that:

   1) Park facility capacity remain, by and large, at present levels with capital and program additions aimed at enhancing day opportunities;

   2) The quality and durability of park facilities be increased;

3) Information programs explaining the provincial system of parks and the park and recreation opportunities of Vancouver Island be emphasized.

These development and management directions:

1) Capitalize on Rathtrevor's high public reputation and key location;

2) Protect the park's special resources and local/regional recreation capability;

3) Retain the high quality recreation experience expected from Provincial Parks; and

4) Complement the role of the surrounding private sector resort operations.

RATHTREVOR FROM THE AIR

## B. Introduction

The Rathtrevor Beach master plan is intended to optimize the conservation and recreation opportunities of the park which is nearing full development but where use frequently approaches or exceeds design capacity in the main use season.

The key issues that will be dealt with are the management of the park's diverse natural, cultural and visual resources under heavy use pressure, the optimization of facilities and their equitable distribution, and the development of a comprehensive park information program.

The park protects an outstanding ocean bathing beach and contains a diverse and very attractive set of visual, vegetation, faunal and cultural resources. Consequently, it is one of the more heavily used parks in the province and the most heavily used on Vancouver Island.

It is centrally located in a major provincial tourist destination area and strategically located on the Island Highway at the portal to the west coast of Vancouver Island and to central and northern Vancouver Island. Therefore it is one of the most highly visible parks in the provincial system. Figure 1.

Rathtrevor Beach is also an important component of a system of local and regional parks and attracts a high volume of local use on a year-round basis. As the Strathcona District Headquarters it is always staffed and serves a major Divisional administrative centre.

PHOTOGRAPH NOT AVAILABLE

GROUP PICNIC AREA

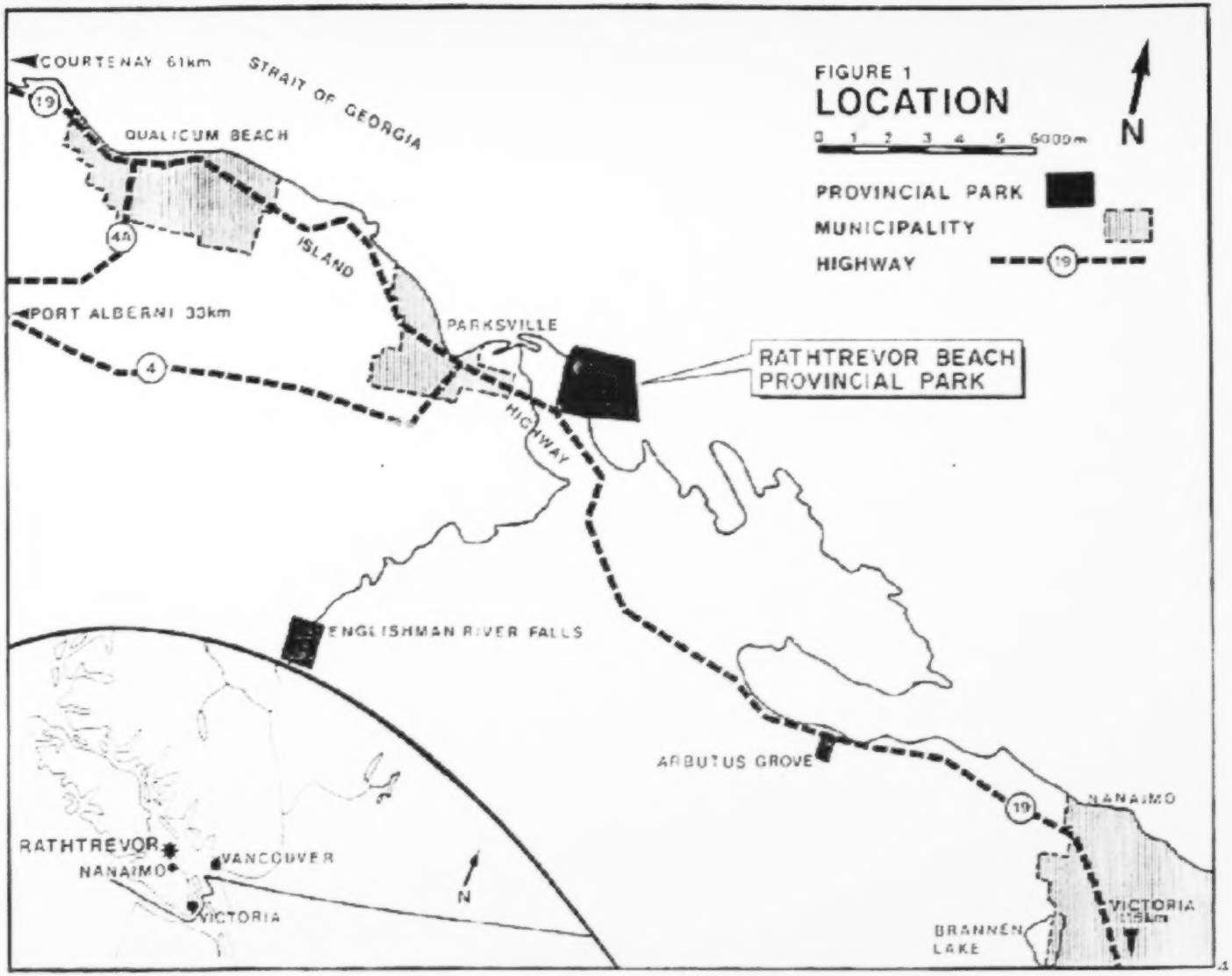


FIGURE 1
LOCATION
0 1 2 3 4 5 6000m
N
PROVINCIAL PARK
MUNICIPALITY
HIGHWAY
COURTENAY 61km
STRAIT OF GEORGIA
QUALICUM BEACH
ISLAND
PORT ALBERNI 33km
PARKSVILLE
RATHTREVOR BEACH
PROVINCIAL PARK
HIGHWAY
ENGLISHMAN RIVER FALLS
ARBUTUS GROVE
NANAIMO
VICTORIA
BRANNEN
LAKE
RATHTREVOR
NANAIMO
VANCOUVER
VICTORIA
N

## C. The Role of the Park

1. Provincial Role

Within the context of the provincial park system's goals of conservation and recreation Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park's major conservation role is the preservation of an outstanding ocean bathing beach. Minor conservation values relate to the park's remaining old growth forest, its cultural landscape, its marine-influenced vegetation, and flora and fauna.

The park plays a major outdoor recreation role, offering outstanding destination and touring opportunities and is an important component of the Parksville/Qualicum area's resort capability.

Because of the park's high profile and location, it has excellent capability to supply increased amounts of park system and recreation opportunity information.

2. Regional Role

The Parksville/Qualicum area has an excellent system of saltwater beaches. However, there is little associated public upland for family and group activities or for a natural experience in a marine beach setting. Rathtrevor provides these missing opportunities.

DAY USE AREA (NORTH END)

GROUP CAMPING

## D. Zoning

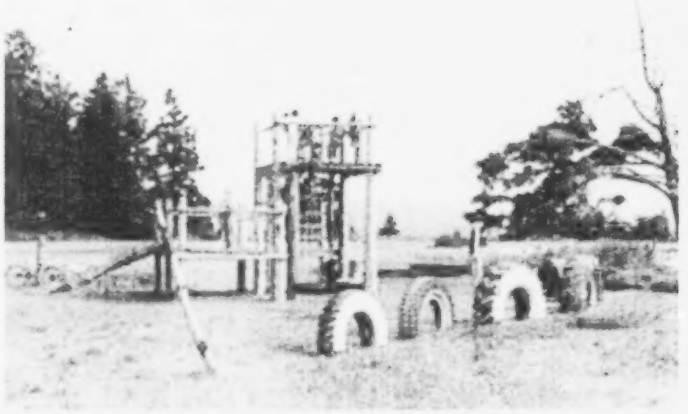
Rathtrevor Beach will be managed with two zones: an Intensive Recreation Zone and a Natural Environment Zone. Excluding the foreshore portion of the park, they are nearly equal in size (Figure 2).

The Intensive Recreation Zone includes the present campground, day use, group use and service areas. This zone will include a small Service Subzone to encompass the existing service yard and District office.

The Natural Environment Zone includes the remainder of the park. This zone contains a Special Feature Subzone to include the special maritime-influenced plant communities of the park, the majority of the intertidal area, the old growth stands of Douglas fir and a minor archaeological site, and the "cultivated" portion of the Rath farm. This zone recognizes the significant contribution these special features make to the flora and fauna of the park and to its visual diversity and aesthetic appeal.

AUTO CAMPGROUND

PLAYGROUND – GROUP PICNIC AREA



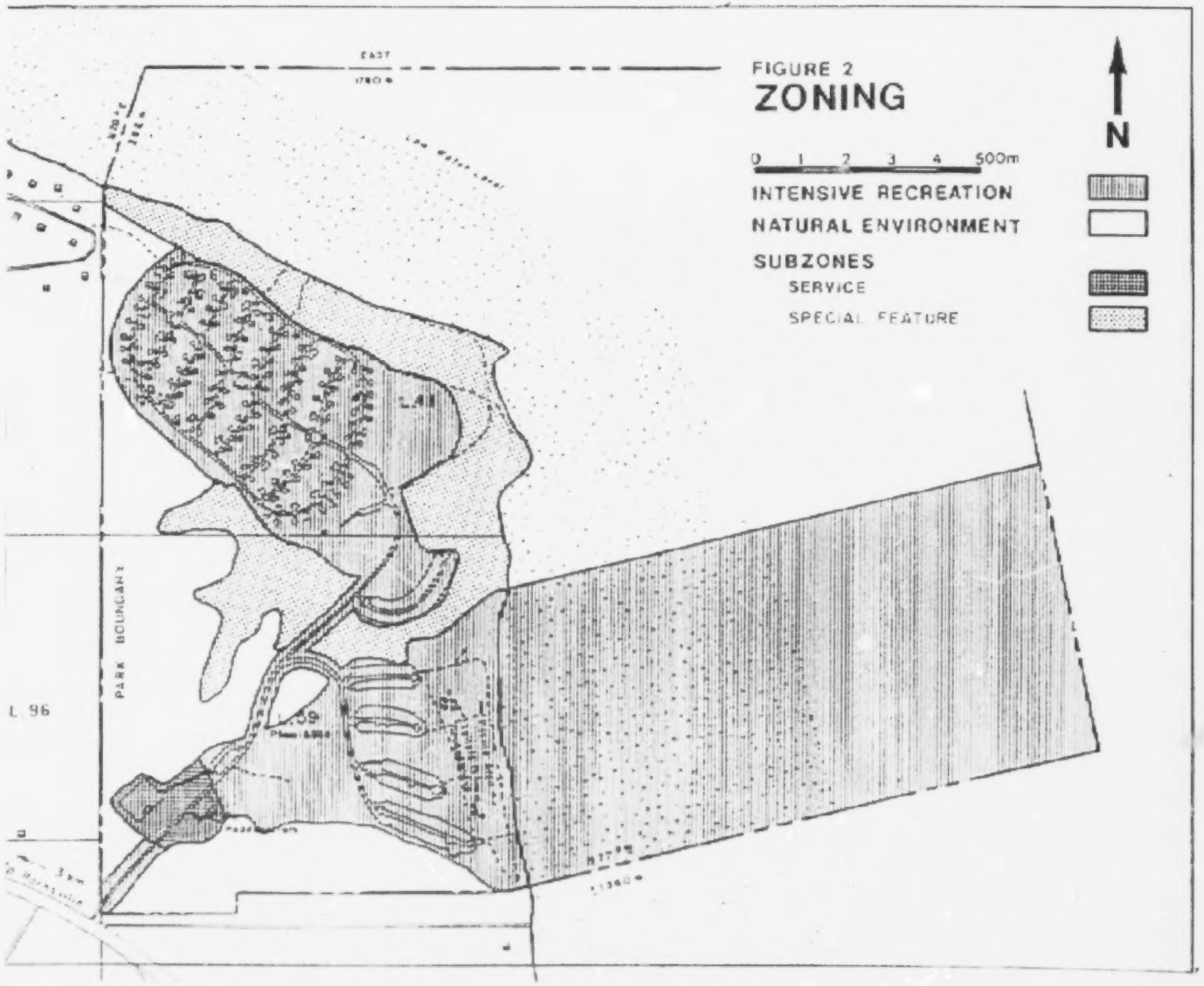


FIGURE 2
ZONING
0 1 2 3 4 500m
N
INTENSIVE RECREATION
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
SUBZONES
SERVICE
SPECIAL FEATURE
EAST
PARK BOURGAULT
L 96

## E. Natural and Cultural Resource Management

1) Introduction

Over the life of this plan, the main objective of resource management will be to retain the present high quality park experience under sustained and increasing high use levels. It is important to retain the present diverse set of natural, cultural and visual environments and where feasible to enhance these resources. This program area will be one of the most important components in achieving the park's conservation and recreation roles.

2) Objectives and Actions

a) Land

Objective: To protect additional land resources as Class A Park.

Between the highway and the park is undeveloped private land. Acquisition of these lands has been suggested but they are not essential to park operations and have low park values.

b) Water

Objective: To retain the natural regime of surface and ground water in Rathtrevor.

i) The small water bodies south and west of the campground will be managed to encourage use by waterfowl.

ii) Existing marsh areas will not be drained or filled.

c) Vegetation

Objective: To retain the present wide variety of vegetation communities in the park.

i) The Special Feature Subzone will be managed to preserve the present vegetation types, species and patterns: native tame grass haymeadows; special shoreline grasses, forbes and shrubs and mature Douglas fir.

ii) The remaining park vegetation will be managed to retain an overall age class and species diversity within the park.

iii) Within the Intensive Recreation Zone vegetation will be managed to sustain a quality recreation experience.

iv) All wildfires will be suppressed.

v) Open fires will be permitted only in designated fireplaces.

vi) Insect and disease infestations and environmental stress which will lead to severe tree mortality or reduced aesthetic quality will be controlled if possible.

d) Wildlife and Natural Resources

Objective: To retain the present diversity of native species inhabiting or using the park.

i) Rathtrevor will remain closed to hunting and harvesting.

ii) Following appropriate feasibility studies, small scale wildlife enhancement projects may be undertaken to encourage nature species.

e) Visual

Objective: To retain Rathtrevor's existing high quality visual environments and views.

f) Outdoor Recreation Features

Objective: To protect the beach and backshore's ability to sustain high use and a high quality recreation experience.

i) Because Rathtrevor is highly developed and heavily used, a higher-than-normal level of intervention in natural processes is acceptable in consideration of public enjoyment and safety and may include such activities as irrigation.

g) Cultural

Objective: To retain the cultural landscape of the Rath farm for as long as feasible.

i) Appropriate vegetation management and fencing will be undertaken throughout the previously farmed portion of the park.

ii) The barn and Rath house are not in themselves historically significant and will not be retained. The barn is of visual interest and not a public hazard as it is fenced. It will be allowed to decay and collapse, at which time the remains should be removed or burned. The house, on the other hand, is not particularly interesting and should be removed when no longer required for operational purposes or if it hinders campground expansion.

iii) Existing archaeological sites will be protected.

PHOTOGRAPH NOT AVAILABLE

FARM FIELDS AND FENCE

h) Research

Objective: To obtain information which will improve resource management and visitor services.

i) Authorized research projects will be non-destructive, will not seriously interfere with park visitors or recreational use of the park and will contribute useful knowledge about Rathtrevor, the Provincial Park system, or park visitors.

ii) Research will be encouraged which will improve knowledge about Rathtrevor Park's marine fluvial history and processes and wildlife, or will lead to enhanced opportunities to view wildlife.

## F) Visitor and Management Services

1) Introduction

Over the life of this plan, the main objective of the visitor services program will be oriented towards improving the quality of existing facilities to sustain a high quality recreation experience under heavy use and to expand information programs to take advantage of Rathtrevor's high use and favourable location.

a) Camping

Objective: To improve where possible the quality of the camping services in Rathtrevor.

i) To prevent a long wait in line, a number system to allocate campsites will be designed and implemented.

ii) A formalized tent-camping area will be developed adjacent to the existing campground.

iii) The grouping camping area will be expanded and improved as use and demand warrant.

iv) Minor increases in camping are possible through infilling and new loops are possible but will not be initiated until private campgrounds in the area are operating over capacity.

b) Day use

Objectives: To optimize the opportunities for a variety of day use activities.

i) Trail access from adjacent subdivisions will be formalized and managed to divert these users around the campground.

ii) Trail opportunities will be expanded into the more natural and lesser used parts of the park.

iii) A visitor service centre will be developed subsequent to the development and approval of an expanded promotion and information program.

iv) The group picnic area will be moved to the south end of the present day use area.

v) Additional playgrounds will be developed.

c) Beach

Objective: To optimize the use of Rathtrevor beach opportunities.

i) At such time as major maintenance is required to the seawall, it will be removed at the north end rather than repaired.

d) Cultural

Objective: To preserve and present the farm landscape (fields, fences, etc.) of Rathtrevor.

i) Whenever feasible the cultural landscape of an early 20th century Vancouver Island farm will be fostered.

e) Private Sector

Objective: To cooperate with the private sector to optimize the ability of the Parksville/Qualicum area to supply high quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

2) Management

Rathtrevor Beach Park will continue to serve as the Strathcona District Headquarters and such facilities and services as required to perform this function may be developed from time-to-time within the Service Subzone.

3. Promotion and Information Program

The promotion and information program will be one of the most important contributions Rathtrevor makes to the Provincial Park system. The program's objective is to expand the public's knowledge of the Provincial Park system, its goals and objectives, and the significant resource values and opportunities available within the parks of British Columbia. This program will capitalize on Rathtrevor's coastal environment, its present high use, and its ready accessibility to a large number of Vancouver Island visitors.

Specifically, Rathtrevor will serve as a centre for the distribution of information about the park and recreation opportunities of Vancouver Island, concentrating on:

a) Opportunities within the Strathcona and Malahat Districts on Vancouver Island; and

b) Opportunities elsewhere in the South Coast Region, but particularly in the Sunshine Coast area.

Information about opportunities elsewhere in the province will be a lower priority. Information will also be provided about the resources and opportunities of Rathtrevor, emphasizing marine and fluvial aspects and processes. A minor portion of the program will be aimed at encouraging shoulder season use to complement facility improvements and encouraging school group use.

As a program by-product, it is expected that more day visitors will be attracted to Rathtrevor and as a result of their visit will be encouraged to visit and use other provincial parks on Vancouver Island.

Actions

i) Develop visitor programs and displays on park and recreation opportunities of Vancouver Island and Sunshine Coast areas.

ii) Develop on-site, self-guiding information program based on marine/fluvial process and resources of Rathtrevor to complement existing visitor programs.

iii) Develop shoulder season use promotion program.

iv) Develop visitor programs and displays on park and recreation opportunities in the remainder of the South Coast Region and the rest of the province. This will include the purpose of provincial parks generally and the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division.

## G. Facility Development and Plan Implementation

As a highly developed park, future investments will be directed toward improving the quality of existing facilities and improving the park's ability to sustain high use levels. This will help retain a high quality visitor experience while protecting the park's natural resources. It will include developments such as road circulation improvement and paving, flush toilets, electrification, irrigation and playgrounds. A greatly expanded information and education program will be a major addition to Rathtrevor services.

An expansion will occur in the trail system and a visitor service centre will be developed once an expanded information and education program is approved and developed. This facility could also serve as a park operation centre (Figure 3).

It is recommended that group picnicking be moved to the south end of the day use area. This will make better use of existing flush toilets, change facilities and parking. Groups will be closer to the beach/foreshore and may, as a result, make more use of this opportunity. More flexible use of parking lot #5 can result, including its use as a holding area for campers awaiting vacancies. Irrigation to sustain high day use can then be concentrated in one area of the park.

This small change in use & facilities provides a significant increase in park conservation opportunities. It will retain a significant portion of the marine-influenced coastal vegetation and one of the more important visual features/corridors of the park without distracting developments and damaging use. The change will also clearly separate day use from camping and allow a future Visitor Centre to relate directly to the present amphitheatre & Rathtrevor's special coastal resources and environment without interference from active recreation.

Phase 1 - construct park entrance portal and improve road aesthetics.

- expand information and education programs.
- move group picnic area.
- pave parking lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- expand and formalize park trail system.
- construct day use area irrigation system.
- construct new playground and improve existing ones.
- construct walk-in campground.
- improve road circulation/alignment to handle present use and future development.
- complete power connection to all public buildings.

Phase 2 - construct visitor centre building.

- expand group camping.
- expand auto camping by infilling and new loops
- remove sea wall.

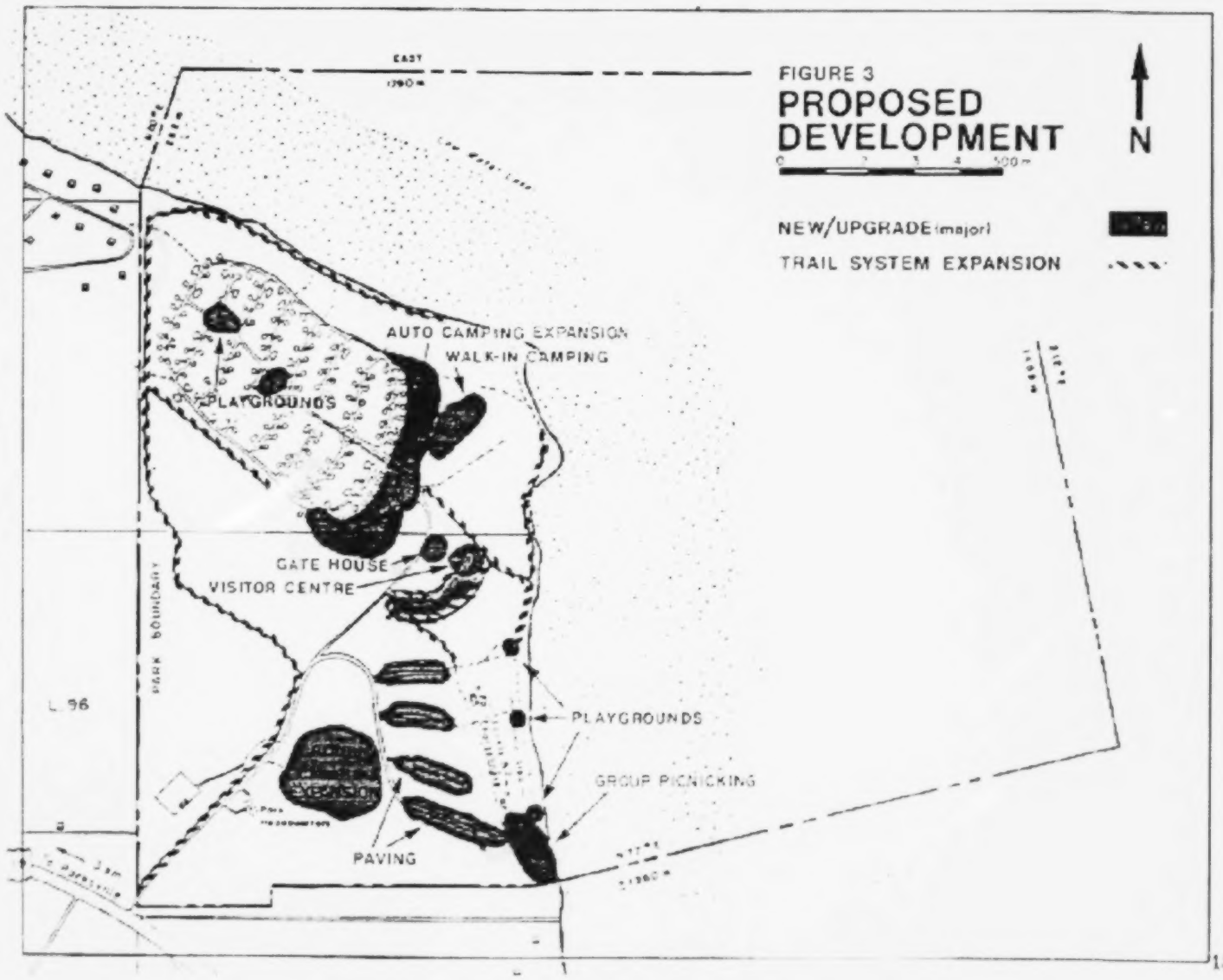


FIGURE 3
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
N
NEW/UPGRADE (major)
TRAIL SYSTEM EXPANSION
AUTO CAMPING EXPANSION
WALK-IN CAMPING
PLAYGROUNDS
GATE HOUSE
VISITOR CENTRE
PARK BOUNDARY
L 96
PLAYGROUNDS
GROUP PICNICKING
PAVING

# Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park

## Background Document

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## A. Introduction

Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park is a Class 'A' park of 348 ha, consisting of 240 ha of foreshore and 108 ha of upland. It is located 3 km south of Parksville and 32 km north of Nanaimo at the south end of the Parksville/Qualicum resort area.

The park occupies a strategic location on Vancouver Island, immediately adjacent to Highway 19, the Island Highway, near the junction of Highway 4, the route to Pacific Rim National Park. Thus the park occupies the portal to much of the west coast and central portion of Vancouver Island and all of northern Vancouver Island (Figure 1).

Rathtrevor was established as a Class 'A' Provincial Park on April 20, 1967 and is included in Schedule 'A' of the Park Act S.B.C. 1965. The foreshore fronting the park was added to the park in 1969. Prior to 1967, a private campground operated on this site, and earlier still, it was a farm.

The land was acquired for park purposes through the exchange of timber harvesting rights in the western part of Wells Gray Park in 1963 and in the Burman and Pamella drainage basins in Strathcona Park in 1966.

## B. Resources

1. Natural Resources

Rathtrevor is primarily a beach recreation park. The environment has been modified by farming and selective logging and more recently by recreational developments.

a) Natural Region

Rathtrevor is located in the Coastal Lowlands Natural Region within the Georgia Strait Lowlands and Island Regional Landscape.

b) Climate

The climate is mild year-round, with warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. Snow is uncommon and quickly melts. The mean annual precipitation is 889 mm with the June-August period averaging 105 mm, 35 mm per month.

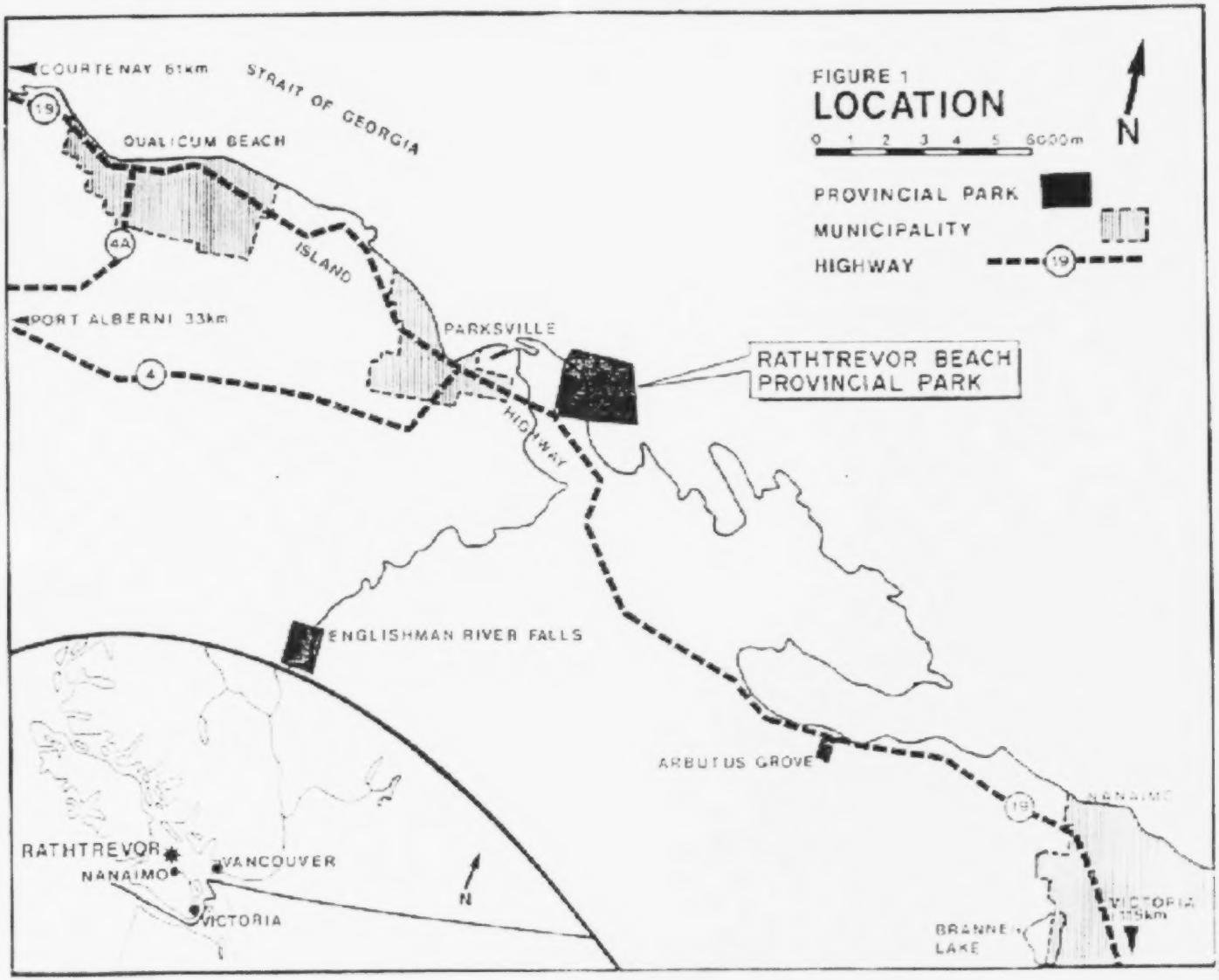


FIGURE 1
LOCATION
0 1 2 3 4 5 6000m
N
PROVINCIAL PARK
MUNICIPALITY
HIGHWAY
19
COURTENAY 61km
STRAIT OF GEORGIA
QUALICUM BEACH
4A
ISLAND
PORT ALBERNI 33km
4
PARKSVILLE
HIGHWAY
RATHTREVOR BEACH
PROVINCIAL PARK
ENGLISHMAN RIVER FALLS
ARBUTUS GROVE
NANAIMO
RATHTREVOR
NANAIMO
VANCOUVER
VICTORIA
N
VICTORIA
BRANNEN
LAKE

There is an average of 1913 hours of bright sunshine per year. The sunniest months are May to August, with an average 257 hours of bright sunshine per month: approximately 54% of the total yearly hours of bright sunshine.

The mean daily temperature averages $23.5^0$ C in July and $4.7^0$ C in January (Table 1).

c) Physiography

Except for the 13 m wave-cut bedrock bank (sandstone and conglomerate) which approximately defines the southern boundary, the park consists of level to depressional deltaic deposits of the Englishman River. Local relief on the delta is approximately 4 m, with a maximum elevation of about 8 m above low water. Figure 2.

The soils of the park are alluvial gravels, sands and silts which at the coastal margin have been reworked by marine processes and wind. They are generally well drained but some areas suffer from a high water table.

The delta portion of the park may be divided into three general topographic units:

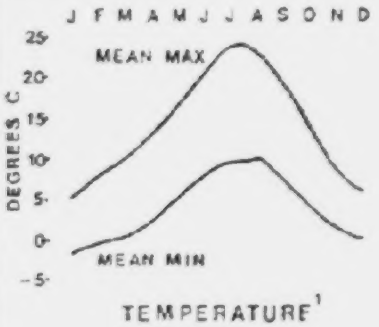
i) the levee-berm-dune area (> 6m) along the shoreline;
ii) the old river channels and other low areas (< 4m); and
iii) the depressional topography between the bedrock bank and river channel/berm area (= 4m – 6m) (Figure 2).

The offshore consists of a "narrow" cobble and gravel beach north of Brant Point, a widening transition gravel and sand beach south of the point and a very wide, shallow ridge and runnel sand beach further to the south. This latter beach, which at low tide is over 500 m wide, is Rathtrevor's most important resource.

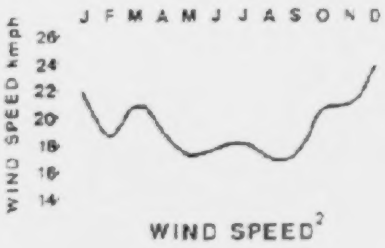
d) Visual Resources

Rathtrevor offers an excellent panoramic view across the Strait of Georgia towards the Coast Mountains and inland towards Mt. Arrowsmith. Within the park, the open meadows and parkland areas near the beach are the most significant visual resources. They are focal points themselves and form a visual corridor opening up near and distant views.

The remainder of the park is forested and of lower visual interest. However, there is some visual diversity within the forest environment (Figure 2).




TEMPERATURE[1]

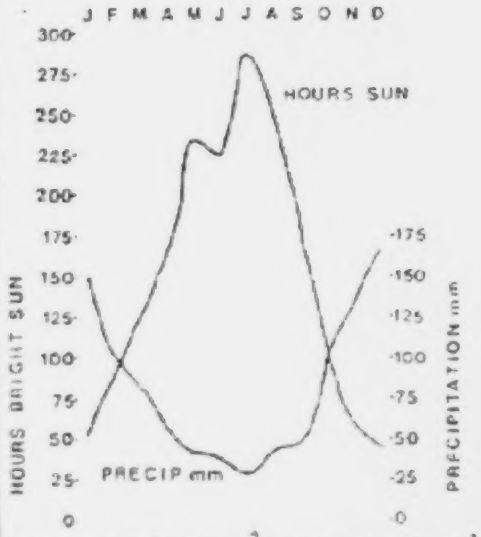



WIND SPEED[2]

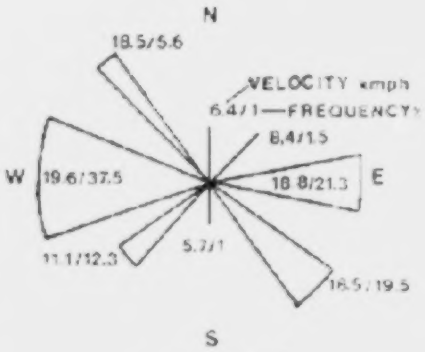
TABLE 1

# CLIMATE DATA

1 PARKSVILLE
2 BALLENAS LIGHT STATION
3 NANAIMO AIRPORT




HOURS BRIGHT SUN[3] & PRECIPITATION[1]




WIND ROSE[2]

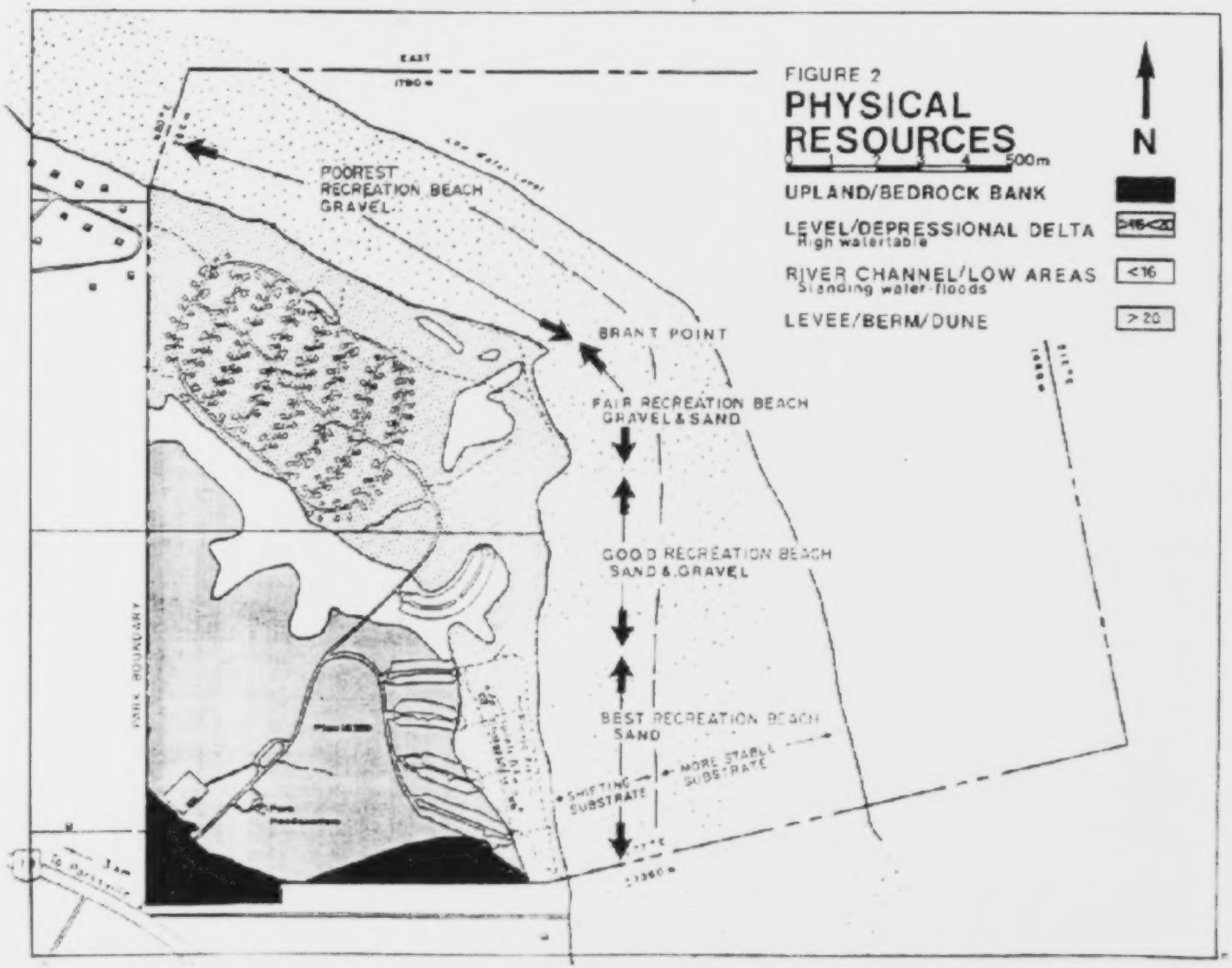


FIGURE 2
PHYSICAL RESOURCES
0 1 2 3 4 500m
N
UPLAND/BEDROCK BANK
LEVEL/DEPRESSIONAL DELTA
High watertable
RIVER CHANNEL/LOW AREAS
Standing water-floods
LEVEE/BERM/DUNE
<16
>20
EAST
POOREST RECREATION BEACH GRAVEL
BRANT POINT
FAIR RECREATION BEACH GRAVEL & SAND
GOOD RECREATION BEACH SAND & GRAVEL
BEST RECREATION BEACH SAND
SHIFTING SUBSTRATE
MORE STABLE SUBSTRATE
PARK BOUNDARY

e)Water

The salt water of the Strait of Georgia is Rathtrevor Beach's second most important resource element.

Tidal influences are significant, exposing the broad sand beach to the warming influence of the sun at low tide. As the tide rises, the incoming water is warmed to a comfortable level for bathing. Normal high tide rises to elevation 4.5 m, with the highest tides rising to 5.2 m

Storm conditions can raise the tide to higher levels.

Low areas of the park, below about 4 m, are subject to winter flooding during high tides or storm conditions. Heavy rains on occasion compound the problem. Areas below 6 m are affected by a high water table, primarily during the winter, but the lowest areas of the old river channel have standing water year round and provide a small but important marsh habitat.

The seasonal flooding and high water table are essential characteristics of the nutrient cycle for all life forms using the park. This unique feature of Rathtrevor should be recognized and maintained to continue the desirable characteristics found throughout the park.

f) Vegetation

Rathtrevor is within the Dry Maritime Subzone of the Coastal Douglas Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone. The park is predominantly forested with a modified, mixed forest as a result of past activities of man. Up to twelve separate communities have been identified, but they fall into four broad categories:

i) Douglas fir: first and second growth;
ii) Mixed;
iii) Deciduous; and
iv) Meadow: marine-influenced and tame/native.

Two communities are of special significance: the mature Douglas fir along the northern beach berm and the marine-influenced meadows. (Figure 3).

One of the key elements in the visitor's experience in the park is the wide variation in vegetation characteristics. The rapid transition from beach to grassland to marsh to old growth forest together with the many edges created by these eco-types is not found in

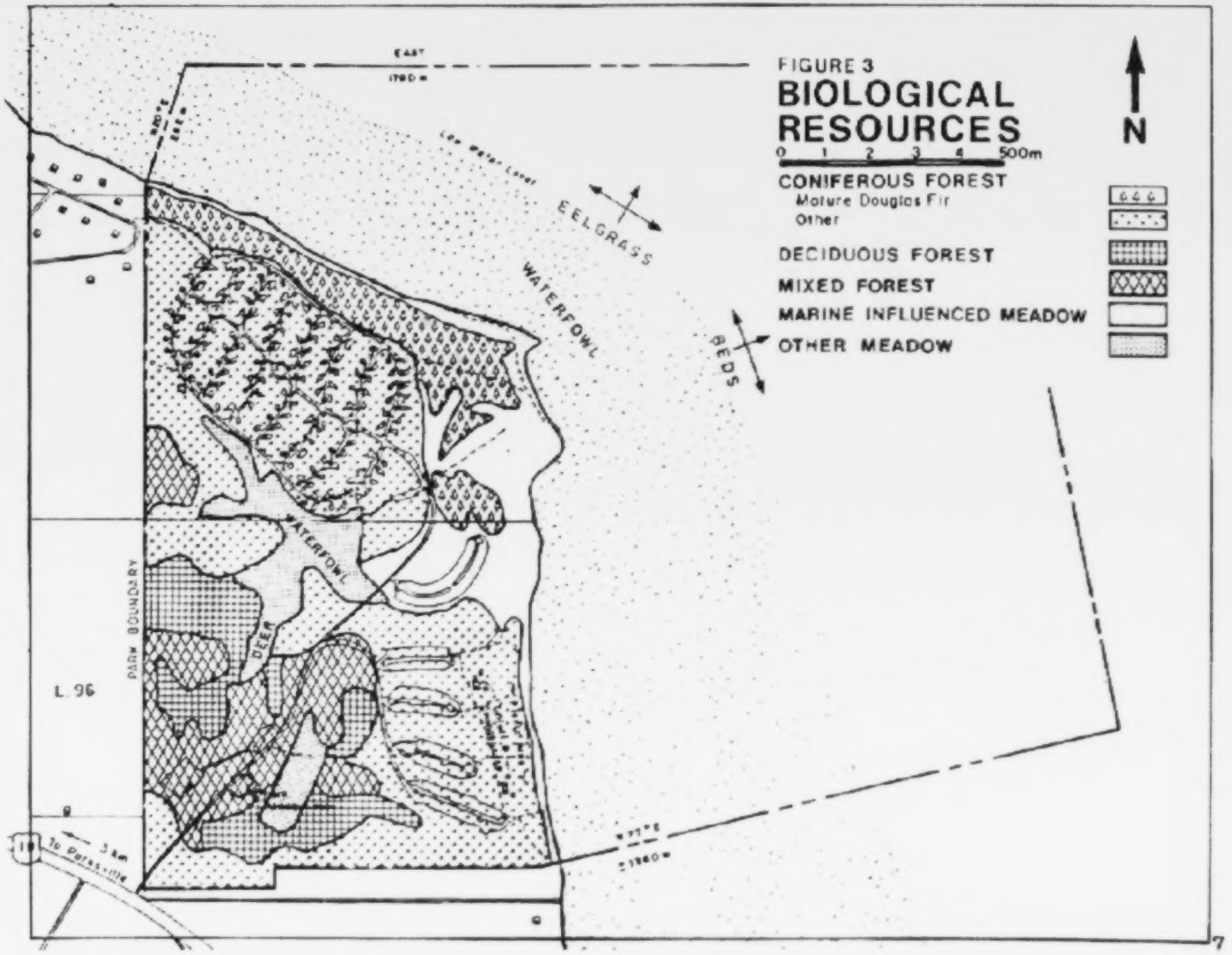


FIGURE 3
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES
0 1 2 3 4 500m
N
CONIFEROUS FOREST
Mature Douglas Fir
Other
DECIDUOUS FOREST
MIXED FOREST
MARINE INFLUENCED MEADOW
OTHER MEADOW
EELGRASS
WATERFOWL
BEDS
WATERFOWL
DEER
PARK BOUNDARY
L. 96
EAST
1780 m
3 km
To Parksville

any other coastal provincial park. This provides the visitor with a variety of walking and aesthetic experience as well as providing that "special" environment unique to Rathtrevor.

The park's marine flora is of minimal interest as it is not rich or diverse.

g) Wildlife

The area's transition from rural to urban has reduced the type and number of animals frequenting Rathtrevor Beach. The only large mammals remaining are deer, which are often seen in the abandoned hay meadows. Other common mammals are raccoons, squirrels, bats and mice. Rats are a common and unwelcome European addition.

Frogs, garter snakes and other reptile occur.

Over 200 species of birds inhabit or use the park. This unusually large number of species is a reflection of the diversity of habitats within the park as a result of the diverse soil, water and vegetation resources.

The park's marine fauna is not particularly rich or diverse due to the offshore substrates and the constant shifting of finer sediments by wind and water movements. It consists of the common sand/gravel/cobble invertebrates (thread worms, acorn barnacles, periwinkles, mussels, littleneck clams, etc.) and the common tidepool fish and invertebrates (sculpin, hermit crabs, purple and green shore crabs etc.).

The most significant marine event is the annual herring spawning in late February and March when schools of herring invade shallow water to spawn on eel grass and other marine vegetation. This phenomenon is not readily visible from shore but it is a unique natural event and attracts some park visitors in an otherwise low-use period.

2 Cultural Resources

a) Archaeological

The park is situated within the traditional territory of the Pentlach Band of the Coast Salish people.

There is one archaeological site within the park, Dh Sb16. It is a thin, badly disturbed midden of limited significance. This indicates a low level of use by natives, probably as a result of limited food resources in the park (Figure 4).

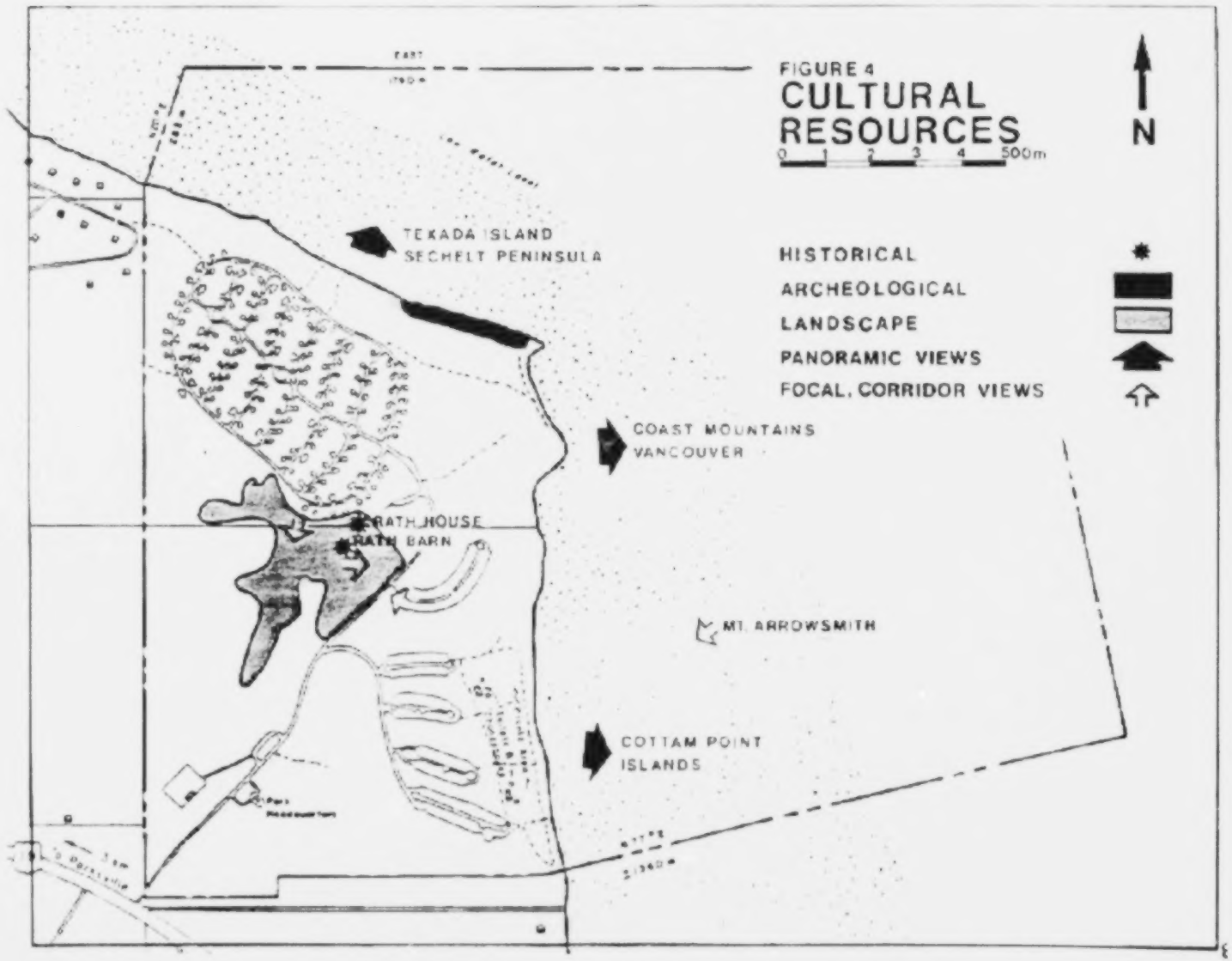


FIGURE 4
CULTURAL RESOURCES
0 1 2 3 4 500m
N
TEKADA ISLAND
SECHELT PENINSULA
HISTORICAL
ARCHEOLOGICAL
LANDSCAPE
PANORAMIC VIEWS
FOCAL, CORRIDOR VIEWS
COAST MOUNTAINS
VANCOUVER
BATH HOUSE
BATH BARN
MT. ARROWSMITH
COTTAM POINT
ISLANDS

b) Historical

The Rath family purchased and began farming the property in 1895. As happened frequently in the coastal zone of the Parksville/Qualicum Beach area, commercial recreation gradually developed and became an important supplementary source of family and community income. The farm first became an important picnic site for the Parksville area and gradually developed as a holiday camping area.

The barn, farmhouse, a few sections of fence, some fruit trees and the hay meadows are all that remain of the farming era. These reminders of the park's early European history are important and form a very pleasant and significant cultural landscape; creating a distinctive atmosphere unique to Rathtrevor.

The barn is of particular visual interest, the Rath house is of little interest. The present campground and picnic areas occupy the original recreation portions of the property. (Figure 4).

3. Analysis

a) Constraints and Opportunities

The park's most significant constraint is its small size in relation to its very attractive resources. The present extent of development is near optimum, with approximately 60 percent of the upland area developed and managed for intensive use. To significantly enlarge one facility or opportunity would reduce the amount or lower the quality of at least one other.

In general, the remaining "undeveloped" land in the park is subject to periodic flooding or has a very high water table. This land is also very important for the wildlife remaining in the park and for retaining the naturalness of Rathtrevor.

The major underutilized opportunity relates to the park's location adjacent to the Island Highway, within a major resort destination area and at the portal to the west coast and northern Vancouver Island.

This locational situation offers an excellent opportunity to develop a very productive information program, one which can reach a large and diverse audience.

Except for the preservation of an outstanding bathing beach, Rathtrevor has a minor role in meeting provincial conservation goals. However, it is important that the existing "natural character" of the park be retained to provide wildlife habitat, visual diversity and recreational opportunity. The retention of the cultural landscape and as much of the natural vegetation and tree cover as possible is very important. It is the park's diverse mix of environments and eco-types, and cultural and natural features which make Rathtrevor so much more attractive as a destination park than its beach alone provides.

b) Significance to Park System Conservation Goals

i) Protection of Representative Natural Landscapes

Rathtrevor's small size and extensive modifications do not allow it to represent the Georgia Strait Lowlands and Islands Regional Landscape. This landscape unit is satisfactorily represented by Desolation Sound Park and the smaller parks of the unit including Rathtrevor.

ii) Protection of Outstanding Recreation Resources

Rathtrevor protects a provincially significant example of a warm-water marine beach and offers outstanding marine bathing opportunities. In addition, the general marine environment, the ridge and runnel beach landform, the delta landform, the cultural landscape, the old-growth Douglas fir and marine-influenced meadow vegetation add to the park's provincial conservation significance.

c) Significance to Park System Recreation Goals

i) Destination Opportunities

Rathtrevor is one of the Province's major destination parks, attracting visitors from throughout British Columbia, as well as a significant number of out-of-province visitors.

ii) Travel Corridor Opportunities

The park also functions as a travel corridor site as a day stop for beach use, rest and information; and as an overnight stop. However, since the park is such a popular destination it cannot adequately fulfill this latter role but it does serve to direct users to other parks and private sector facilities.

iii) Regional Recreation Opportunities

The park serves as an important regional recreation opportunity but this is incidental to its role as a destination park.

## C. Land Tenures, Occupancy Rights and Jurisdictions

1. Leases and Use Permits

Park Use Permit 1218 in favour of Energy, Mines and Resources (Canada) for the use and maintenance of a gravity station (Figure 3).

The hydro and telephone lines are not covered by a permit.

2. Fee Simple Lands

None.

3. Other Tenures and Interests

None.

Interest has been expressed in log salvaging off the beach. To date, all requests have been refused.

4. Trespasses

None.

5. Mineral Claims

Sub-surface retained by the E & N Railway Company. No other mineral claims.

6. Statutory Jurisdictions

a) Rathtrevor Beach is a Class 'A' park, Category 6, included in Schedule 'A' of the Park Act.
b) Heritage Conservation Act - archaeological site DhSbl6.
c) Fisheries Act (Canada) applies to the foreshore.
d) Wildlife Act - no hunting or discharge of firearms is allowed by park regulations.
e) Navigable Waters Act (Canada) - applies to the foreshore.
f) Environment and Land Use Act - applies.
g) Water Management Act - applies.

7. Major Additions or Adjustments to Boundary

None.

## D. Recreation Opportunities and Management Services

1) Recreation Opportunities

a) Beach

This is the primary recreation opportunity offered at Rathtrevor and has a variety of activities and group types associated with it.

b) Day Use

This is a year-round opportunity including such activities as walking, nature and cultural appreciation, playing, and is intimately associated with the beach opportunity.

c) Camping

Camping consists of both group and individual camping and an informal area suitable for walk-in tenting.

d) Boating

Rathtrevor is not a prime site for boating but specialized activities such as sailboarding may occur.

2) Public Facilities

The total estimated replacement value of all facilities in Rathtrevor is approximately $4.7 million. The public component is approximately $4.4 million and consists of the following facilities. Figure 5.

a) Campground

i) 174 sites
ii) gatehouse with pay telephone
iii) 3 washroom buildings (6 showers & 8 flush toilet units per building)
iv) 8 pit toilets
v) 1 playground
vi) 3.8 km paved roads
vii) pressure water
viii) amphitheatre

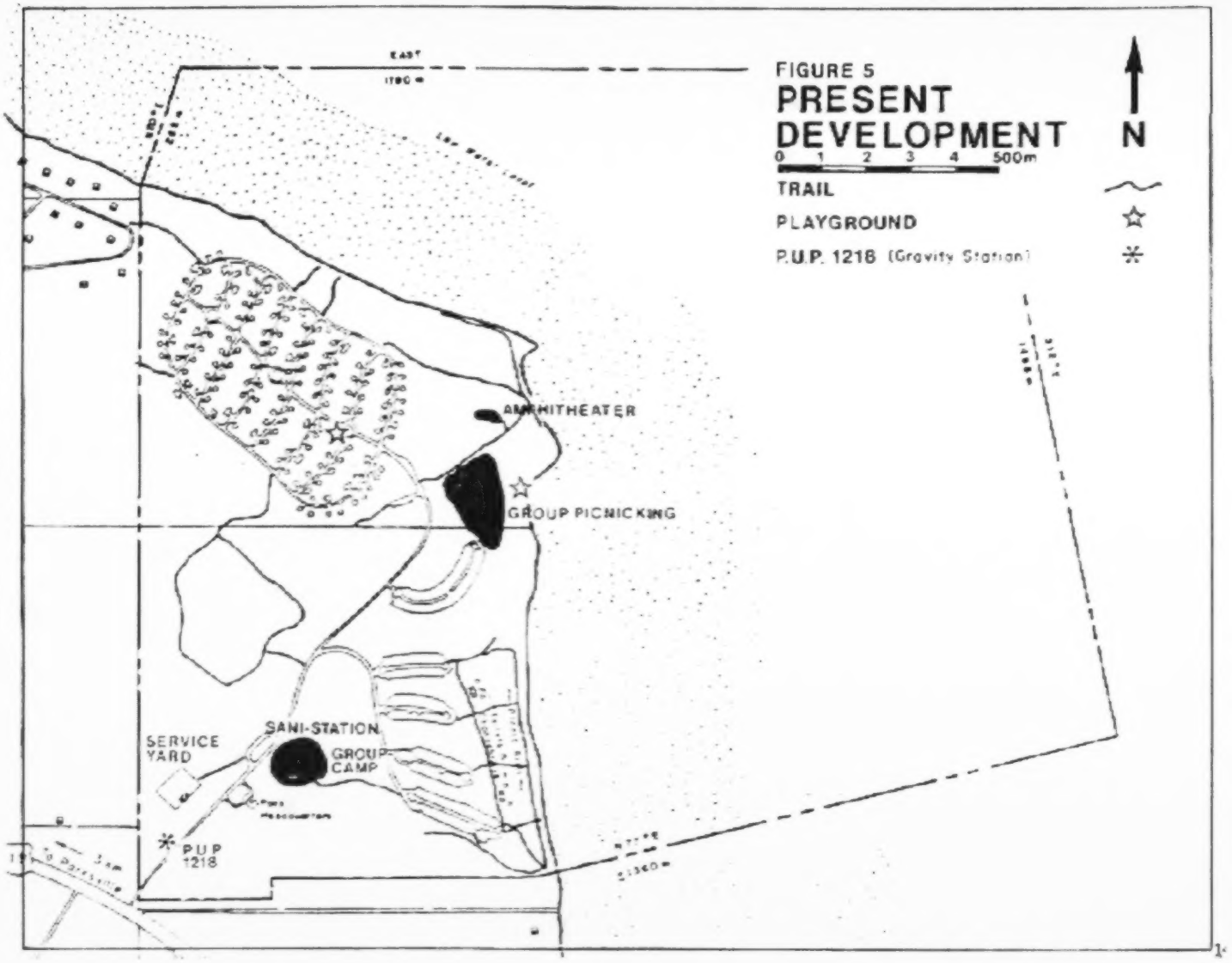


FIGURE 5
PRESENT DEVELOPMENT
0 1 2 3 4 500m
N
TRAIL
PLAYGROUND
P.U.P. 1218 (Gravity Station)
AMPHITHEATER
GROUP PICNICKING
SANI-STATION
SERVICE YARD
GROUP CAMP
P.U.P. 1218

b) Day Use Area

ii) 2134 m of beach
iv) 2 flush toilet buildings (8 unit)with cold showers
vi) 4 change cabanas
viii) 1 Type 1 information shelter
x) 2.5 km paved roads
xii) Seawall
i) 816 parking spaces s
iii) 5 km of trail
v) 6 pit toilets
vii) 9 fire rings/4 wood corrals
ix) pressure water
xi) Rath House visitor centre

c) Group Day Use Area

i) 300 parking space
iii) 6 pit toilets
v) 1 playground
vii) horseshoe pit
ii)2 picnic shelters
iv)2 fire rings/1 wood corral
vi)pressure water

d) Group Camping Area (Capacity 150)

i) 1 washroom building (4 showers& 6 flush toilet units)
iii) 5 fire rings/1 wood corral
ii)8 pit toilets
iv)pressure water

e) Other

i)1 sani-station

It is not clear what function the seawall performs. At its northern end it hinders beach access, particularly for children and seniors, while at the south end it serves as a useable shoreline bench. However, it interferes with normal beach processes and is believed to be the major contributor to the death of trees on the adjacent backshore.

The use of the Rath House as a visitor centre is an interim measure. It is poorly located and not designed for this use. In future, a more suitable facility and location should be provided for this program.

The self-guiding capability of the park's trails is being improved through better signing and on-site information.

3) Management Services

Rathtrevor is the administrative centre for the Strathcona District, The Arrowsmith Subzone and the District construction program. Facilities include an office complex and large service/storage yard.
The park is well situated to continue to perform these functions. There is room in the Service Subzone for any facility expansion which may in future be required.

## F. Market Analysis

1. Existing Use

In 1985, Rathtrevor entertained 124,000 parties and in 1984, almost 119,000. Except as noted, the following analysis is based on 1985 use.

a) Camping
Approximately 20 percent of visitors stay overnight (24,291 parties). Approximately 52 percent of the camping parties visit in July and August and an additional 29 percent in June and September. However, camping occurs every month of the year with almost 2,000 camping parties between October and April.

Eighty-two percent of campers are from British Columbia, 13 percent are from the rest of Canada and 5 percent are from the United States (1979). Forty-four percent of B.C. campers are from Vancouver Island and 13 percent are from the Vancouver area (1979).

b) Day Use
Eighty percent of visitor parties came only for the day (99,738), with 46 percent of day use occurring in the July-August period. Almost 25 percent of day use occurs in the October-April period.

c) Group Use
Rathtrevor is the main group use park on Vancouver Island. Group camping accounted for approximately 10 percent (2345 parties) of the total camping in the park.

2. Demand

Rathtrevor Beach is one of the most popular parks in the provincial system. In 1985, each campsite was used 125 times; the highest number of visits per site in the province. Each of its 1,100 day parking spaces was used 89 times; the tenth highest in the province.

The campground occupancy rates for June, July and August is over 100 percent with the July and August rates both over 110 percent. Even after both highway and park entrance signing indicates a full campground, in July and August between 20 and 110 camping parties (average of 35) are turned away each day.

Day use parking lots are filled one or two days per year, but with organized parking there would be no overflow.

Overall, the Parksville area is one of the top four Vancouver Island destination areas and serves as a major overnight stop for those travelling between the other three. Daily summer traffic volumes are between 13,000 and 14,000 vehicles per day. Between 6,900 and 7,400 of these are recreational trips and between 4,800 and 5,200 of these are multi-day recreation trips.

Ministry of Transportation and Highways' origin/destination studies south of Rathtrevor have found the park to be the specified origin or destination of between 172 and 185 vehicles per day. Considering the park's size, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways indicated that these numbers show the park to be a significant attraction.

3. Supply

Rathtrevor is near the centre of a region which has an extensive and diverse set of outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities (Figure 6) (Table 2). These vary from strictly nature orientation such as MacMillan Provincial Park and Buttertub Marsh in Nanaimo; special natural features such as Horne Lake Caves; Newcastle Island and Petroglyph's cultural opportunities; and the walking, beach and boating opportunities of areas such as Little Qualicum Falls, Spider Lake and Pirate's Cove Provincial Parks, Qualicum Beach and Brannan Lake.

Rathtrevor primarily offers a beach opportunity and is one of three ocean beaches in the Parksville/Qualicum resort area. It offers the most natural setting and most extensive facilities. It is the only public area where camping is available.

FIGURE 6

## PARK OPPORTUNITIES

PROVINCIAL ★

OTHER ▲

Table 2

**Park Opportunities by Product Line**
**(Maximum 2 Major Products)**

| Park | Beach/ Picnic | Accommodation Camping | Boating | Natural/ Cultural | BackCountry | Winter |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Horne Lake | | | | • | | |
| Spider Lake | • | | • | | | |
| McMillan | | | | • | | |
| Little Qualicum | • | • | | | | |
| Englishman River | • | • | | | | |
| Rathtrevor | • | • | | | | |
| Petroglyph | | | | • | | |
| Morden Colliery | | | | • | | |
| Memer | | | | • | | |
| Rouerts | • | | | | | |
| Pirates | | | • | | | |
| Arbutus Grove | | | | • | | |
| Qualicum Beach | • | | | | | |
| Parksville Beach | • | | | | | |
| Brannen Lake | • | | • | | | |
| Long Lake | • | | • | | | |
| Westwood Lake | • | | | | | |
| Pipers Lagoon | • | | | | | |
| Departure Bay | • | | • | | | |
| Brechin Lagoon | | | • | | | |
| Rathco Sutton | • | | | | | |
| Bowen | • | | | | | |
| Buttertubs Marsh | | | | • | | |
| Morell Sanctuary | | | | • | | |
| Rhododendron Lake | | | | • | | |
| Gabriola Sands | • | | | | | |
| Newcastle Island | | | • | • | | |

Private camping opportunities are available at 17 ocean-oriented resorts and a number of other lake or river-oriented resorts. There are nearly 1,900 private campsites at these resort areas. In addition, at the Qualicum Indian Reserve, there are 110 seasonal lease campsites with room for up to 40 overnight camping parties. This area does not advertise. Therefore in the private sector, there are over 2,000 campsites within 30 minutes of Rathtrevor. Englishman River and Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Parks offer overnight accommodation for 196 parties in addition to the 174 sites at Rathtrevor (Table 3).

Overall there are in excess of 2,400 camping sites within 30 km of Rathtrevor Beach. A small sampling of private campgrounds indicated that there is an oversupply of camping capacity.

There are, in addition, complementary river-oriented day use opportunities at Englishman River and Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Parks, and lake opportunities at Spider Lake Provincial Park.

4. Market Summary

a) Rathtrevor is the most intensively used provincial park campsite and one of the system's most heavily used day areas.
b) The park is a significant recreation destination, as is the entire Parksville/Qualicum area.
c) During July and August, camping demand is greater than capacity at Rathtrevor.
d) There is excess camping capacity in the area.
e) There is no shortage of day use beach opportunities at Rathtrevor.

5. Implications

a) At this time, there is no need to expand either day use beach or camping opportunities at Rathtrevor.
b) The high use and broad geographic distribution of visitors would maximize impact of information programs.
c) The strong attraction of Rathtrevor and its high use levels could be used to spin off use to other park and private recreation opportunities in the area.

## TABLE 3

### PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CAMPSITE SUPPLY

| Area | Campgrounds | Sites | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Qualicum Beach/Bay | 10 | 667 | |
| Parksville | 12 | 1084 | |
| Lantzville/Nanoose | 5 | 296 | |
| TOTAL | | 2047 | 84.7% |
| | | | |
| Rathtrevor Provincial Park | 1 | 174 | |
| Englishman River Provincial Park | 1 | 105 | |
| Little Qualicum Provincial Park | 1 | 91 | |
| TOTAL | | 370 | 15.3% |
| GRAND TOTAL | | 2417 | 100% |

## F. Key Issues for the Master Plan

Rathtrevor is a major provincial park conserving an outstanding ocean beach and offering excellent camping and beach recreation opportunities. The park is extensively developed and fully operational on a year-round basis with auto camping use at facility capacity and other uses on occasion close to capacity. The park serves as the Strathcona District Headquarters.

The dominant issues revolve around the handling of high demand/full capacity so as to maintain a high quality recreation experience, and the expansion of the park's information-education role. Rathtrevor could function as a primary information node on Vancouver Island, informing visitors of the Islands park resources and opportunities, explaining the provincial system of parks and directing visitor use to central and northern Vancouver Island parks and recreation opportunities.

1. Natural and Cultural Resource Management Issues

   a) Rathtrevor's beach is its primary resource. The maintenance of the immediate backshore area's capability to sustain heavy use is critical.

   b) Other areas within the Natural Environmental zone, particularly in the Special Feature subzone, may be required to sustain very heavy use. Intervention in the normal resource process may be necessary to sustain such use and retain a quality recreation experience.

   c) Outside the protection of the beach resource, Rathtrevor has moderate provincial conservation values. However, the park has a wide variety of eco-types and park environments which are very important as regional resources and essential to the maintenance of Rathtrevor's aesthetic and visual values and diversity of recreation opportunities. The retention of this diversity and where possible its enhancement is an important consideration.

2. Visitor Service Issues

   a) During July and August, many potential campers are turned away. There is potential for limited expansion but the private camping sector has excess capacity.

   b) Daily, during July and August, campers line up for available spaces as early as 0600 hours. There is a need to develop a simple, equitable means of distributing vacant campsites without greatly inconveniencing visitors or staff.

c) The 1979 Vancouver Island Regional Interpretation and Information Plan recommended that Rathtrevor serve as the District centre for a high priority interpretation and information program. The park has great potential to reach a very wide audience because of its high use levels and ability to attract visitors from a wide geographic area.

d) Rathtrevor's high profile requires that park facilities be of the highest possible standards to sustain use and meet visitor expectations.

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